Fox Hills fire guts 50 rooms

Eleven departments, 200 firefighters dispatched

By PAT PANKRATZ
Herald Times Reporter
Staff Writer

MISHICOT — Fire Sunday night virtually destroyed an L-shaped wing of 50 rooms at the Fox Hills Resort and Conference Center, and 12 guests of the hotel were evacuated.

Ron Likas, president of the Fox Hills Corp., said most guests in the hotel had checked out after the weekend by the time the fire was reported about 5:45 p.m.

Likas said hotel clerks immediately evacuated remaining guests to separate condomimiun structures at the Fox Hills complex.

Approximately 200 firefighters from 11 departments battled the blaze which raged through the two-floor structure at the west end of the main Fox Hills motel building.

Mishicot Fire Chief Wayne Kornely said at the scene this morning that the wing was a total loss. No monetary estimate of damages was immediately available. A walk through the complex showed charred walls and ceilings, with water, mud and hanging wires everywhere. Burned desks, bedding and television sets were strewn about.

Heat and electricity to the structure were turned off Sunday night.

Crews remained on the scene throughout the evening, with Mishicot firefighters going back about 3 a.m. after "hot spots started smoldering," the fire chief said.

Kornely indicated that the fire was difficult to fight because it continually spread in areas between the ceiling and roof, both on the first and second floors of the structure. He compared its complexity to a fire that caused over $1 million in damages at the Shopko Plaza in Manitowoc on July 4, 1987.

"It was the same type of thing because the fire got in the walls and ceilings and we had a hard time getting at it," Kornely said. "By the time you got it knocked down, it would flare up in another place."

A backhoe unit was used to remove portions of the burning building to make the effort easier, Kornely said.

The heaviest damage was in the corner of the L-shaped struc-

(See *Fire*, page A3)

A firefighter from the Mishicot Fire Department pauses to catch his breath while waiting for a new air tank at the scene of a blaze at Fox Hills, Sunday night in Mishicot. *HTR* photo by Ken Seeber

Firefighters dowse flames in a section of Fox Hills Resort in Mishicot Sunday. Eleven fire departments combining 200 firefighters fought the blaze into the morning hours. Fifty rooms were reportedly destroyed.

Herald Times Reporter photo by Ron Hoerth

Regional

Doug Totten, computer account analyst at Fox Hills Resort and Conference Center, tours the burned out section that contained his office and several guest rooms at the motel complex today. Fire Sunday night destroyed 50 rooms at the motel.

Herald Times Reporter photo by Ken Seeber

Fire

(Continued from page 1)

ture, moving in an area toward the main Fox Hills office. The fire was stopped at the point where a rounded brick structure begins.

Assistant Mishicot Fire Chief Robert Ferry said he believed the blaze was stopped by a fire wall between the L-shaped portion and the brick area.

Sheriff's Department Chief Investigator Eugene Kusche planned to return to the scene later this morning to begin an investigation into the cause and origin of the fire. He was in consultation with Joseph Murray of the Appleton office of the state arson bureau of the Department of Justice.

Kusche emphasized, however, that no determination has been made as to the cause of the blaze at this point.

The burned out area was the so-called 400 Wing of the Fox Hills complex, and was currently under renovation. The area also housed the accounting section of the business, according to computer account analyst Doug Totten.

Totten and Fox Hills chief financial officer Tom Luecke were clearing out salvageable records from their offices there this morning. Some of the paper records were saved by metal file cabinets, but several personal computers and typewriters were melted. Totten estimated computer damage alone at $30,000.

"It's a real mess in here, watch out for low wires," Totten said as he led a reporter and photographer through the second floor of the ruined structure.

Dave Inman reported for work on the renovation of the 400 Wing this morning.

"Well, I guess I won't be working today," said Inman, who works for RJL Construction of Cleveland. He said the renovation had appeared about 75 percent finished. Totten said the wing was due to open in March or April.

Joining the Mishicot Fire Department at the scene were units from Carlton, Two Creeks, Tisch Mills, Valders, St. Nazianz, Rockwood, Francis Creek, town of Two Rivers and the cities of Manitowoc and Two Rivers.